Post, 10/21/68

Showdown Over Soviet Missiles Recalled

Military Is Criticized by RFK In Account of '62 Cuba Crisis

By Brian Sullivan

NEW YORK, Oct. 20 (AP)—Robert F. Kennedy, in his personal account of the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, said that President John F. Kennedy's military advisers seemed unable to see beyond their recommendations for military action.

One member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Kennedy wrote, urged that nuclear weapons be used on Cuba.

One member of the Joint Chiefs, he said at another point, said he believed in a preventive attack on Russia.

"I thought, as I listened," the late Senator wrote, "of the many times that I had heard the military take positions which, if wrong, had the advantage that no one would be around at the end to know."

With the exception of retired Gen. Maxwell Taylor, Kennedy wrote, President Kennedy was "distressed" that the military advisers apparently felt there would be no response from the Soviet Union or Cuba to military action by this country.

And, if there was a response, he continued, these advisers seemed to feel a war would be in this Nation's best interest.

Even after Soviet Premier Khrushchev announced on Sunday, Oct. 28, 1962, that he was withdrawing the missiles, thus ending a nuclear confrontation, one high military adviser, Kennedy said, urged that the United States attack Cuba anyway.

This approach, Kennedy said, underscored the need for civilian control, for carefully examining military recommendations, and was one of the reasons his brother considered Defense Secretary Robert S.

See KENNEDY, A12, Col. 5

The Washington Post will publish a three-part series on Robert F. Kennedy's account of the 1962 Cuban missile crisis beginning next Sunday.

KENNEDY, From A1

McNamara the most valuable man in the Government.

Sen. Kennedy's 21,000-word memoir was published today by McCall's magazine. McCall's paid an unprecedented price of more than $1 million for it. The magazine limited direct quotation of the article to 200 words.

The account of the crisis, titled "Thirteen Days," places much greater emphasis on President Kennedy's concern with his military advisers than do accounts by Theodore C. Sorensen in his book "Kennedy" and Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. in "A Thousand Days."

Kennedy wrote that Gen. Cutis E. LeMay, then Air Force Chief of Staff, was a strong advocate of military attack against Cuba.

LeMay, now the vice presidential running mate of George C. Wallace, assured the President the Russians would not react, Kennedy said.

To which the President replied, "They, no more than we, can let these things go by without doing something. They can't, after all their statements, permit us to take out their missiles, kill a lot of Russians, and then do nothing. If they don't take action in Cuba, they certainly will in Berlin."

The memoir said President Kennedy had to withstand "forceful arguments" from the military that he escalate his planned action, and it details sharp, frequently emotional debate among all the advisers.

Because of the immense pressure, Kennedy said, some of the advisers even seemed to "lose their judgment and stability."

The memoir includes some private thoughts: Sen. Kennedy described a grave moment in the deliberations when Soviet vessels were within a few miles of the quarantine line marked by U.S. warships. He watched his brother.

"His hand went up to his face and covered his mouth. He opened and closed his fist. His face seemed drawn, his eyes pained, almost gray. We stared at each other across the table.

"Inexplicably, I thought of when he was ill and almost died; when he lost his child; when we learned that our oldest brother had been killed; of personal times of strain and hurt."

When the sudden word came that the Russians were withdrawing the missiles, Robert Kennedy was at a horse show in the Washington Armory. With nothing to do but to await the possibility of a military confrontation, he said, he took his daughters on the long-promised outing.

He got the news in a telephone call to the armory from Secretary of State Dean Rusk and went to the White House.

He said he and his brother talked for a long time.

When Robert Kennedy left, the President was writing a letter to the wife of Maj. Rudolf Anderson Jr., one of the two Air Force U-2 pilots who discovered the missiles. Anderson was killed when his plane was later shot down over Cuba.

"He talked about Major Anderson and how it is always the brave and best who die. The politicians and officials sit home pontificating about great principles and issues, make the decisions, and dine with their wives and families, while the brave and the young die."

Sen. Kennedy, while stressing the importance of civilian control over the military, said the missile crisis also showed the need for respect around the world for this country.

Respect, friends and allies, Kennedy said, made the American action in this crisis possible.

Writing five years later, Kennedy said he detected a sense of isolationism in the country and in Congress. He said would be useful to look back to October, 1962.

Kennedy said distress over the Vietnam war should not cloud the possibility of other missile crises, however different, in the future.

President Kennedy also encountered difficulty, Robert Kennedy wrote, when he met with Congressional leaders to inform them of the crisis.

Many of them felt a blockade was not a sufficiently strong response and urged military attack or invasion. Among them were Sen. Richard B. Russell (D-Ga.) and Sen. J. W. Fulbright (D-Ark.). Their positions had been reported in previous accounts of the crisis.